

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is intended for pre-service teachers in English teacher education who serve as mediators in online, synchronous settings. Those new to this role will discover practical tips and advice to enhance the effectiveness of telecollaboration sessions. This guide is designed to be a valuable resource for training students to become mediators. Given the practical constraints of having only two tutors for all groups, it becomes challenging to effectively monitor and scaffold activities in all Zoom sessions.

Becoming a mediator presents an opportunity for participants to develop their skills in facilitating online interactions. It equips them with transferable skills for their continued professional development and enhances their employability.

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Guide for Mediators



ICTinELT TR-POL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background.....	1
What is the role of mediators?	2
Tips for group meetings.....	4
Before entering the group sessions.....	4
Group sessions.....	5
Troubleshooting common problems	6
Technological problems.....	7
Environment and time management.....	8
Interactional Problems	9
Intercultural understanding.....	11



BACKGROUND



This project aims to foster the development of participants' English language teaching (ELT) competencies, specifically in teaching with technology. To reach this goal, this telecollaboration project encourages participants to develop an English language teaching task integrating ICT tools.



Participants will actively engage in telecollaboration meetings featuring eight live synchronous discussions/workshops conducted on Zoom. These sessions will cover the following steps: Introduction to ICT in ELT, Familiarization with various ICT tools, selecting linguistics content to teach with an appropriate method/technique/approach and using an ICT tool, Developing ICT-enhanced ELT tasks, Giving feedback, and Finalizing ICT-enhanced ELT tasks.



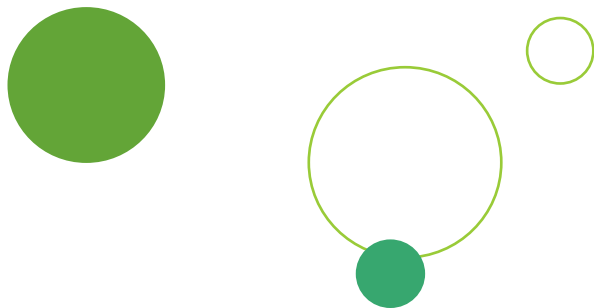
This project includes mediators to address intercultural, digital, and linguistic challenges that may arise during the facilitation of telecollaboration tasks. This guide has been developed by the researchers to complement this role and is based on the findings and outcomes of previous telecollaboration projects (e.g. EVOLVE, ViVEXELT)

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MEDIATORS?

The proposed role of a mediator involves facilitating interaction and participation while maintaining awareness of intercultural sensitivities to support the successful completion of project tasks.

The mediators' aims include:

- Establishing a safe, secure, and welcoming learning environment.
- Ensuring active engagement and acknowledgement of all participants, including those not visible on camera.
- Optimizing the utilization of available technological features, such as microphones, cameras, emojis, chat, screen sharing, and caption activation, to enhance accessibility.
- Providing support for activities by structuring in stages, step by step.
- Carefully managing the allocated time for efficiency.
- Monitoring the accessibility of technology for all participants
- Facilitating the sharing of knowledge



WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MEDIATORS?

While being considerate of:

- Varied levels of digital and linguistic proficiency, as well as 'tech anxiety'.
- Technical challenges and limitations, such as poor Wi-Fi, background noise, participants' settings, and constraints.
- Participants operating in different time zones, which may result in a reluctance to be on camera.
- Acknowledging the 'right to lurk', where some participants might be hesitant to actively participate or contribute for various reasons.
- Avoiding dominance in the Zoom interaction.
- Ensuring providing 'space' for different viewpoints.

And demonstrating:

- Recognizing and understanding different viewpoints of others
- Showing respect for cultural diversity.
- Demonstrating sensitivity and taking immediate action whenever necessary.



TIPS FOR GROUP MEETINGS

4.1. Before entering the group sessions

After participants have been allocated to groups, mediators are advised to:

- Collaborate with group members to decide on the most convenient time for the meetings.
- Confirm a thorough understanding of assigned tasks.
- Be aware of the allocated time for the task before joining the Zoom sessions.
- Have copies of essential materials or have access to links for sharing.
- Confirm access to the Zoom link as the sessions will be pre-set.



TIPS FOR GROUP MEETINGS

4.2. Group sessions

Introductions and informal conversations should be promoted to establish a safe, secure, and welcoming space conducive to learning. Each participant should be encouraged to contribute, whether through speaking with or without their camera on or responding via the chat feature.

- Initiate casual conversation at the start of each session to help participants feel comfortable.
- Advocate for participants to set their cameras to show a head and shoulders image, but refrain from insisting on camera, as some may have valid reasons for not using it.
- Utilize the chat box for sharing links and screen sharing to ensure everyone can access the materials required.
- Employ both open and closed questions to guide discussions and assess understanding.
- Monitor speaking turns to ensure everyone has contributed to the discussion.
- Regularly check the chat box for written responses and integrate them into the conversation.
- Motivate participants to share insights from their respective contexts.
- Encourage comparisons and reflections on diverse and/or similar teaching practices involving ICT.

TROUBLESHOOTING COMMON PROBLEMS

Being a mediator can be challenging because it involves the management of numerous situations simultaneously and often within a limited timeframe. Additionally, critical intercultural incidents may arise.

Here are some recommendations for handling a range of challenging tasks. All mediators will be assigned the co-host role to empower them to perform the actions outlined below.

MEDIATORS, TAKE A BREATH, UNTANGLE THE KNOTS, AND TURN CHALLENGES INTO COLLABORATION VICTORIES



TECHNOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Issue 1: Background noise is ruining the audio quality and creating difficulty in hearing.

Possible Solution: Request participants to mute their microphones. If this proves ineffective, the mediator will need to mute participants.

Issue 2: The participants' microphone is not working.

Possible Solution: Request them to respond using the chat box.

Issue 3: Participants are attempting to speak, but you can't hear them.

Possible Solutions: Instruct them to unmute. If this does not work, request them to check their settings and/or adjust the volume.

Issue 4: There is an ongoing technical issue.

Possible Solution: Advise participants to exit the meeting and then rejoin. If this does not work, consult the tutor in charge of the session. If the technical issue remains unsolved, consider rescheduling the meeting for a later time.

ENVIRONMENT AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Issue 1: No one has their camera activated.

Possible Solution: Advise everyone to turn on their camera, even if just to say hello but avoid making it mandatory.

Issue 2: Children are visible on camera.

Possible Solution: Privately message the relevant participant. and request them to turn off their camera. If they do not comply, take the initiative to turn it off yourself (mediators will have co-host roles).

Issue 3: Participants are experiencing issues accessing the digital tool selected for a task.

Possible Solutions: If participants cannot access the recommended digital tool, provide an alternative solution or ask other participants to input the contributions of the participant facing issues on the shared tool. Alternatively, request them to share their screen in Zoom.

Issue 4: There is not sufficient time to complete the task.

Possible Solution: Attempt to establish a tentative 'time management plan' within Zoom. Consider extending the allocated time to ensure participants have adequate time to finish the task.

INTERACTIONAL PROBLEMS

Issue 1: Participants show hesitation to interact.

Possible Solution: Utilize a range of open and closed questions. Type a closed question in the chat box and encourage responses there to build confidence in the technology and environment.

Follow up by posing open questions to elicit more extensive responses.

Respond positively to contributions, whether verbally in the chat box or using emojis. Ensure emojis convey the same meaning across the countries involved in the telecollaboration to prevent misunderstandings.

Issue 2: Extended lack of participation from a participant

Possible Solution: Refrain from highlighting non-engagement and foster inclusivity, irrespective of whether contributions are made. Some L2 speakers may be particularly self-conscious about their English proficiency.



INTERACTIONAL PROBLEMS

Issue 3: One of the participants is dominating the meeting.

Possible Solution: Enforce time limits, nominate, and encourage other participants to contribute. If needed, send a carefully worded private chat message to the participant in question to emphasize the importance of time constraints.

Issue 4: Participants fail to complete the task.

Possible Solutions: Assist participants by offering support, providing hints, and reminding them of necessary steps.

Issue 5: Participants hold different opinions on a task.

Possible Solution: Gently acknowledge the existence of diverse interpretations. If one participant provides a wholly incorrect answer, guide them towards the correct response without drawing attention to error if possible.

INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

The following suggestions can contribute to respecting differences:

- Facilitate and mediate in a neutral manner.
- Recognize that politeness strategies differ among countries and could lead to misunderstanding.
- Be aware that the meaning of emojis may vary across cultures, so use emojis with caution.
- Be aware of individual sensitivities regarding language proficiency in written or spoken communication.
- Provides various avenues for individuals to engage with content, such as chat forums or verbal interaction on camera.

